

# News Release



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**Many items never before displayed to the public**

## **Original Donner Party Relics on Display for One Day Only At Sutter's Fort State Historic Park on February 18**

SACRAMENTO – For one day only, the Sutter's Fort State Historic Park is providing the public with a rare opportunity to see original Donner Party relics, many never before displayed.

"It is wonderful to be able to share some of California's hidden history with the general public," said Steve Beck, park interpretive specialist for California State Parks at Sutter's Fort SHP. "It really is truly hidden history, behind a locked door that 175,000 school children a year rattle and wonder what's behind it."

The items going on display include the original hand drawn map of the Donner Party route and a travel diary of the group's originator, James Frasier Reed. Also displayed will be relics from the Donner Lake camp and the 1856 wedding dress of Patty Reed of "Donner Party" fame, with its 21-inch waist.

Of particular note is the rough draft of the *Ide Proclamation* from the Bear Flag Rebellion, described as California's declaration of independence from Mexico. It is the only original work remaining of the *Ide Proclamation* papers known in existence. Not seen since the 1930s, a museum volunteer happened across it sandwiched into the pages of a book. Patty Reed bought it from the author's brother and it became part of her collection.

The display will be open to the public during "Pioneer Demonstration Day." Every month, for one day, the park will rotate pieces of California's history from the Sutter's Fort Archives. This is an opportunity to view many items housed in the room that was once known as "Sacramento's Attic." Visitors are invited to spend the day with costumed docents and experience 19th century California. For more information, visit [http://www.parks.ca.gov/default.asp?page\\_id=485](http://www.parks.ca.gov/default.asp?page_id=485).

The story of the Donner Party is the most famous tragedy of western migration that began in 1846. A group of settlers in Missouri were headed to Sutter's Fort by wagon train when they got trapped by heavy snowstorms in the Sierra Nevada in what is now Truckee. There, they set up camp at Donner Lake and tried to wait out the unusually harsh winter. Nearly half of them died of exposure and starvation. Only a few made it to Sutter's Fort in Sacramento and search teams rescued the remaining survivors. Of the original 87 pioneers, 41 died and 46 survived the 2,650-mile trip.

The display will be open 10 a.m. - 4 p.m. on February 18 at 2701 L Street in Sacramento. Archive research time is available by appointment at (916) 323-8112. For all other questions and general information, please dial (916) 445-4422. This event is sponsored by the Sacramento Historic Sites Association.

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